

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 TRSE-00
IO-13 /065 W

-----171759Z 116312 /47

O P 171615Z APR 77 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1002

INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KABUL
CINCPAC PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 3741

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJ: TOO LITTLE, TO LATE?

SUMMARY: OFFERS MADE BY PRIME MINISTER IN APRIL 17 PRESS
CONFERENCE WILL PROBABLY BE VIEWED BY OPPOSITION AS INADE-
QUATE, UNSATISFACTORY AND UNACCEPTABLE. DURING MEETING
WITH PRESS IN LAHORE, PM ANNOUNCED REVIVAL OF COUNCIL OF
ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY TO ENSURE NATION'S LAWS ARE IN
ACCORDANCE WITH ISLAMIC LAW, BANNED GAMBLING AND INSTITUTED
PROHIBITION, ESTABLISHED SPECIAL COMMISSION TO
RECOMMEND LEGISLATION TO END CORRUPTION.
HE ALSO OFFERED TO END EMERGENCY IF VIOLENCE STOPPED, TO
LIFT SECTION 144, AND SAID HE WOULD
ALLOW THE JAILED OPPOSITION LEADERS TO BE HELD IN THE SAME
LOCATION SO THEY COULD CONSIDER HIS PROPOSALS.
HIS PROPOSAL TO MEET THE OPPOSITION DEMAND FOR FRESH
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ELECTIONS MERELY REITERATED THE "BAKHTIAR FORMULA",
WHICH THE PNA HAD REJECTED TWO DAYS EARLIER.

1. DURING PRESS CONFERENCE EARLY EVENING APRIL 17,
PRIME MINISTER MADE FURTHER CONCILIATORY GESTURES TO
THE OPPOSITION-ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF MAKING PAKISTAN
A MORE "ISLAMIC STATE"- BUT DID NOT OFFER TO MEET ANY OF

THEIR BASIC DEMANDS, INCLUDING HOLDING FRESH ELECTIONS OR TENDERING HIS RESIGNATION. PM OPENED CONFERENCE BY EXPRESSING GRIEF AT THE LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY AND CALLED FOR AN END TO ALL AGITATION. HE THEN WENT ON TO LIST VARIOUS REFORMS AND ACTIONS WHICH HE OBVIOUSLY HOPES WILL BE SEEN AS PROVING HIS GOOD WILL AND SHOWING HIS DESIRE TO BE FORTHCOMING AND REASONABLE IN MEETING THE OPPOSITION'S CONCERNS.

2. THE CENTER

PIECE OF THE CONFERENCE WAS THE STEPS HE PROPOSED TO BRING THE LAWS OF THE COUNTRY INTO CONFIRMITY WITH THE QURAN AND SUNNAH (ISLAMIC SHARIAT LAW). IN OBVIOUS MOVE TO MOLLIFY CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS AND TO REBURNISH HIS MUSLIM BONA FIDES, THE PM ANNOUNCED A BAN ON ALL FORMS OF GAMBLING AND ALSO IMMEDIATE PROHIBITION. ALL WINE AND LIQUOR SHOPS WILL BE CLOSED AND ONLY FOREIGNERS AND NON-MUSLIMS CAN PURCHASE LIQUOR.

3. AS FURTHER STEP, PM ANNOUNCED THAT THE COUNCIL OF ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY WOULD BE REVIVED. THE COUNCIL, WHICH IS MORIBUND AND WAS ESTABLISHED UNDER A CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION, IS SUPPOSED TO ENSURE THAT PAKISTAN'S LAWS ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SHARIAT. THE PM RECOMMENDED THAT MAULANA MAUDOODI SERVE ON THE COUNCIL. HOWEVER, IF "HIS HEALTH OR HIS AGE PRECLUDED THIS", A NOMINEE OF THE JAMAT-I-ISLAMI- A CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS PARTY WHICH IS ONE OF THE LINCHPINS OF THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT- COULD SERVE. AS OTHER MEMBERS THE PM SUGGESTED MUFTI MAHMUD

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AND SHAH AHMED NOORANI- BOTH JAILED LEADERS OF THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE- AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VARIOUS ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS AND DOCTRINAL SECTS. ALSO ESTABLISHED WILL BE A SPECIAL COMMISSION WHICH WILL, WITHIN TWO MONTHS, DESIGN A CODE OF MORALITY FOR THE NATION AND RECOMMEND APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION.

4. BHUTTO ALSO REITERATED HIS OFFER TO IMPLEMENT THE BAKHTIAR PLAN, ALREADY REJECTED BY THE OPPOSITION, UNDER WHICH IF THE PNA RECEIVED A MAJORITY OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEATS IN NEW PA ELECTIONS, THE PM WOULD AGREE TO HOLD FRESH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. ADDITIONALLY, HE SAID HE WAS WILLING TO LIFT SECTION 144 (UNDER WHICH LOCAL MAGISTRATES CAN BAN GATHERING OF MORE THAN FIVE PEOPLE) THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, PROVIDED PROCESSIONISTS NOTIFIED THE LOCAL MAGISTRATE IN ADVANCE OF THEIR MARCH ROUTES. IF THE PROCESSIONS BECOME VIOLENT, SECTION 144 MAY AGAIN BE IMPOSED.

5. DURING QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, BHUTTO MADE

FOLLOWING COMMENTS. HE SAID HE HAD MET WITH MAULANA MAU-
DOODI THREE TIMES SINCE THE ELECTIONS AND HE WAS
CONSIDERING PROPOSALS MAUDOODI HAD MADE. HE ADDED HE COULD
NOT DISCUSS THEM PUBLICLY SINCE THE MEETINGS WERE PRIVATE.
HE SAID HE WOULD LIFT THE EMERGENCY IF VIOLENCE STOPS.
HE ALSO, IN RESPONSE TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION, SAID HE
WOULD ALLOW ALL THE MAJOR OPPOSITION LEADERS PRESENTLY
INCARCERATED TO BE MOVED TO THE SAME JAIL SO THEY COULD
MEET, AND CONSIDER HIS PROPOSALS, MORE EASILY. HE STATED
THAT HE WAS NOT SETTING ANY TIME LIMITS AND THE OPPOSITION
CAN TAKE ITS TIME IN CONSIDERING HIS OFFERS.

6. WE WILL BE DOING FULL ASSESSMENT OF THE PM'S OFFERS
AND ANY OPPOSITION

LREACTION TOMORROW. OUR INITIAL VIEW,
HOWEVER, IS THAT THE CONFERENCE, WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON
ISLAMIC TOPICS, WAS A FURTHER ATTEMPT TO CONCILIATE THE
PNA AND TO APPEAL TO THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN THE
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OPPOSITION. WE BELIEVE THE OPPOSITION WILL FIND THE
GESTURES INADEQUATE AND UNSATISFACTORY, NOT RESPONSIVE TO
THEIR BASIC DEMANDS, AND THEREFORE UNACCEPTABLE. THE PRO-
POSALS SEEM ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF BHUTTO'S COMING UP WITH
TOO LITTLE TOO LATE.

BYROADE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: OPPOSITION PARTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ISLAMA03741
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770133-0663
Format: TEL
From: ISLAMABAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770449/aaaabqik.tel
Line Count: 145
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2781828
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TOO LITTLE, TO LATE? SUMMARY: OFFERS MADE BY PRIME MINISTER IN APRIL 17 PRESS CONFERENCE WILL PROBABLY BE VIEWED BY OPPOSITION A
TAGS: PINT, PK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/76d1cba3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009